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ABSTRACT

The question of the provision of libraries to support primary and secondary education in South Africa has been overlooked by most education departments and educators and is not a focal point of current education planning. The present provision of library services by the different education authorities is generally poor; school libraries have long been at the bottom of the list of education priorities and receive little funding in comparison to libraries at tertiary education institutions. Some form of school library system providing both pupils and educators with easy access to information sources will be essential for the rejuvenation of the South African education system. However, recent policy changes do not bode well for the future development of school libraries, as the responsibility for financing schools falls increasingly on parents. This paper provides a description of the current state of school libraries in South Africa, focusing on schools falling under the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (KDEC) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) in Natal. A brief overview is provided on the trends in the international literature on school libraries in developing and developed countries. Also presented is a review of the trends in South African literature on school libraries and recent policy developments. (AEF)

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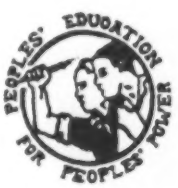
SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Catherine Stadler

EPU Working Paper No. 2
June 1993

Education Policy Unit
University of Natal
Durban



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School libraries in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The question of the provision of libraries to support primary and secondary education has in the past been overlooked by most education departments and educationists, and is not a focal point of current education planning. The present provision of library services by the different education authorities is generally poor, and the state has made scant attempt to correct imbalances. School libraries have long been at the bottom of the list of education priorities, and receive little funding in comparison to libraries at tertiary education institutions. Some form of school library system providing both pupils and education providers with easy access to information sources will be essential for the rejuvenation of the South African education system. However, recent policy changes do not bode well for the future development of school libraries, as the responsibility for financing schools falls increasingly on parents.

This paper covers the following:

- a description of the current state of school libraries in South Africa, focusing on schools falling under the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (KDEC) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) in Natal;

- a brief review of the trends in the international literature on school libraries in developing and developed countries;

- a review of the trends in the South African literature on school libraries, and recent policy developments.

1. Introduction: libraries and educational research

> Since the natives...the coloured people...and the Indian pay taxes, it is feared that if the subscription method of support is not kept all these inferior races will be entitled to use of the books on the same terms as those of European origin. The South African is willing...for the native to cook his food, care for his children, keep his household in order, serve him in a personal way, carry his books to and from the library, but he would feel that an end of his regime were at hand if this same servant were permitted to open these books and read therein... (Ferguson and Pitt 1929:10).

During the 1980's and early 1990's, there was a proliferation of books, journal articles and conferences on the state of South African education. However, one has to search long and hard through such publications for any evidence that substantial attention has been paid to the issue of school libraries by education authorities, academics or activists. This lack of attention, together with a variety of other factors, has resulted in the debates around future scenarios for school libraries under a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic government lagging behind those of other sectors such as health and education.

While the formal library profession remains on the whole conservative, a small 'alternative' sector, consisting of the progressive non-governmental (NGO) resource centres, has been contributing towards accelerating change and transformation. Larger political change has also contributed towards this.

Issues which need to be addressed include, inter alia, the marginalisation of school librarians both within schools and in the library profession, the over-bureaucratisation of services, the dominance of white librarians in over 70 percent of professional posts, the absence of a school library organisation, a lack of realistic funding for these services and the low level of substantial policy research (National Education Policy Investigation 1992).

Some policy issues have been debated locally by library and information organisations, but it was only in the early 1990's that a private sector NGO, Read Educate and Develop (READ), initiated a nationwide policy project investigating school library policy. This was followed by the participation of library and information organisations in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), a project of the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC). Hence it is only recently that policy research in the field of school libraries has taken on a more coherent nature.

School library provision is often said to be one of the preconditions for "excellence in education" and for academic achievement, although most of the authors who argue this point are librarians and not educationists. This has created a gap between librarians and information

workers and other educationists. This gap may recently have begun to narrow, but its existence continues to exert an influence on education policy at a national and local level. This is evidenced by the continued poor provision of library services by the respective education authorities.

This is a peculiar state of affairs, especially considering that educational research confirms the cost effectiveness of making reading material available to students from lower income families (Fuller 1987). Other studies, such as those completed in Namibia, confirm the view that access to libraries enhances educational achievement (Totemeyer 1990).

2. School libraries under apartheid

> During my primary school days I had rooted everywhere for newsprint to read, any old scrap of paper. Our ghetto had no newspaper deliveries and no libraries (forty years later we still don't have them) (Mphahlele 1984:13).

Each of the 19 education departments in South Africa administers its own funds and policy relating to school libraries/media centres with the result that there is an uneven provision of libraries amongst the racially-based departments. Services that are provided by Bantustan education departments and the DET are highly inadequate. According to Verbeek (1986:23), library services in these departments are characterised by too few books, a racist and conservative bias in the literature which does exist, and

insufficient library staff.

Other studies support this picture of school libraries in African schools. Buildings are decrepit and ill-equipped, and trained teacher-librarians administering collections are the exception rather than the rule (Overduin 1989:274). Book stock is inferior, consisting of donations of books or centrally controlled collections (Overduin 1989:277; Raju 1989:10). Schools in the bantustans suffer worse provision than those falling under the DET and other education departments. The case of the KwaZulu schools described below vividly illustrates this. The studies by the Education Projects Unit - now known as the Education Policy Unit - (EPU) (1988) and Dulcie Krige (1990) also support this general picture.

Insufficient basic library facilities at most African and coloured schools are the outcome of the unequal allocation of resources between the various racially differentiated education departments. The House of Delegates (which controls Indian schools) has in the past prioritised the provision of resources and, consequently, its library provision is vastly superior to that of many of the other education departments.

Deficient library provision for African schools is largely the result of the historical neglect of African schooling in South Africa. This neglect was structurally entrenched by the introduction of bantu education in 1953 and the later devolution of administrative control to the bantustans.

Widely varying policies on planning and the differential financing of education services in South Africa can be

attributed to having so many education departments in the country. School libraries have been affected by the lack of funding and interest displayed in promoting these services, especially by the African and coloured education departments. The Bantu Education Act (No 47 of 1953) made no provision for the training of teacher-librarians, nor for the provision of libraries in African schools.

By comparison, the provision of school libraries/media centres in the white education departments is good. In the 1930's, 28 percent of Natal's white schools were still without any libraries, but the recommendations of the Carnegie Corporation Survey into Libraries served to assist their growth (along the lines of separate development of services).

The 1928 Carnegie Conference on Libraries made the following observation with regard to the state of school libraries:

> The library is a "side line" of the native branch of the education department and its care is one of the duties of the clerk without any training in library work. The catalogue of books is a bald record of additions; it gives no indication of the scope or character of the books. No effort has been made to popularize the library (Coetzee 1975:51).

The recommendations of Pitt and Ferguson of the Carnegie Corporation include that 'non-European' books supplied should be kept separate from those supplied to European children. White school library specifications are given greater thought (for example, there is discussion on the

provision of reference books, the importance of such provision, and the need to set aside a separate room for the establishment of a library) (Coetzee 1975:133).

It is clear that the Carnegie report treated provision for white schools differently to that for black schools.

By 1951, the first fully developed library service was established by the white Transvaal Education Department (Musiker 1986:200). School libraries were established at white schools in Natal in the early 1950's. Other white provincial education departments also developed their own school library systems, and virtually all white schools now have a library.

In Natal, there are almost no libraries at African primary and secondary schools. This applies to both KDEC and DET schools. There is a lack of basic reference, fiction and non-fiction books in schools controlled by the DET and the KDEC. In 1986, the average number of library books per pupil in DET schools was calculated at 1, compared with 16 for school pupils in the (white) Natal Education Department (NED) (Overduin 1989:278). The DET has begun to develop classroom libraries at primary school level and has budgeted for resource centres for secondary schools (Verbeek 1986:37). However, it was only in 1983 that the DET began to explore "the role of the library in black education".

The DET prescribes the selection of books for school libraries/media centres. Greater control is practised over the provision of books in African schools than in the other education departments (Musiker 1986:49), and books are

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provided centrally by the DET. In addition, books not included in 'selected lists' cannot be purchased without the permission of the school inspector (Frylinck 1980:53). A similar situation exists in the bantustan education departments where school library materials are purchased and processed centrally by the national libraries (Frylinck 1980:54).

Although the DET began implementing some of the 1983 resolutions to improve the provision of library services, these services remain inadequate as a support to teaching and independent learning. This is demonstrated by the need for the continued assistance of READ, which provides library services to numerous African schools (READ 1989:5).

> The READ organisation renders an important supplementary service in providing books and by training teachers in the organisation and utilisation of book stock. This service is offered in close collaboration with the Department [of Education and Training] (Department of Education and Training 1989:81).

In 1980, an amount of half-a-million rand was allocated for the building of library facilities (Musiker 1986:49). This R500 000 compared with R10 000 in 1963, R40 000 in 1973 and R120 000 in 1979 (Frylinck 1980:54). In 1986, a building plan was initiated to provide all schools with library accommodation within five years. Surveys of schools attest to the fact that this was not carried out. School libraries at 30 technical schools were being developed in 1980 with R10 000 allocated to each school.

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Those schools with library buildings were given priority (Frylinck 1980:54). The DET Annual Report for 1985 states:

> With one or two [sic] exceptions all secondary schools have school libraries. These are provided with books systematically... Std.6- and Std.7- pupils at primary schools have access to suitable books which are distributed to them from a central point (Department of Education and Training 1986:172).

Despite the DET claims that "with one or two exceptions" there has been adequate provision of libraries for black schools, this is not the situation in either KwaZulu or DET schools as the study by Krige (1990) clearly shows. Krige found, for example, that on average, 76 percent of primary and secondary schools had neither libraries nor books other than textbooks. Krige (1990) shows that by comparison, the figure for DET schools in Natal without libraries or books was lower - 42 percent for both primary and secondary schools. In total, 76 percent of KwaZulu schools were without books or libraries.

Furthermore, Krige found that while a total of 76 percent of schools in KwaZulu were without libraries, only 3 percent of those schools with libraries were stocked and 3 percent of schools had a library but no books. 85 percent of the KDEC primary schools fell under the category "without libraries and books" (Krige 1990).

Krige's study and an unpublished study by the EPU, Natal, conducted at different times (EPU in 1988 and Krige in 1990), both attempted to form a statistical picture of the

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provision of black education. The EPU statistics reflect a rural bias and include only 8 of the 25 circuits of the KDEC. The questions asked about libraries were less detailed than those formulated by Krige. However, they provide a useful comparison with other variables such as student enrolments and teacher qualifications.

The EPU study shows a similar picture to that emerging in Krige's study. Primary schools were worse off than secondary schools, with only 3.9 percent having libraries. In 3 of the 8 primary school circuits surveyed, not one of the schools had a library, while in the circuit with the highest occurrence of school libraries, only 9.1 percent of the schools had established libraries. 46 percent of secondary schools had libraries, but the percentages varied from as low as 20 percent in some circuits to as high as 66 percent in the Nongoma circuit, the home of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi (Education Projects Unit 1988).

Some libraries had book boxes. Resources are not always shared easily between schools and this created competition between schools. 6 percent of primary school pupils had access to libraries, as opposed to 43 percent at secondary level.

In none of the circuits was pupil access to libraries higher than 42.8 percent (Nongoma). The lowest percentage of pupil access to library facilities is amongst primary school pupils. In one circuit, only 13.6 percent of secondary pupils had access to school libraries.

Provision of libraries at schools is not related to high pupil enrolment. One circuit, for example, had a total primary

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and secondary school enrolment of 10 078, with only 2 libraries. In contrast, another had an enrolment of 8 775 but had 6 libraries (Education Projects Unit 1988).

This research clearly illustrates the under-provision of basic support services for teaching activities at schools. Pupils and teachers have little or no access to books or other types of teaching resources to supplement conventional textbooks. Statistics gathered can only be used as an indication of the extent of underprovision of resources in schools. Similar figures were not available for other bantustans for comparison (Education Projects Unit 1988).

Krige's (1990) study categorised schools according to the presence or absence of books, and whether or not the book collection constituted a school library. The category which occurred most frequently was that of "no books, no libraries" among the KwaZulu schools. Very few fell into the category "library stocked" - less than 5 percent of the KwaZulu schools have libraries which are stocked.

The situation in DET schools in Natal is only slightly better. In 1990, DET schools accounted for 10 percent of the total African schools in the area, with the KDEC controlling the other 90 percent. In the DET circuits in Natal, 30 percent of schools have a stocked library but 22 percent of these libraries are described as not being adequately stocked. 17 percent of DET secondary schools were recorded as being with neither books nor libraries.

By contrast, similar size schools (more than 200 pupils) in KwaZulu reflected the following: 8 percent have a library with inadequate bookstock; 65 percent have neither books

in the classroom nor a school library.

Thus, as in other areas of education, the impact of bantu education on the provision of library services has been catastrophic.

3. Trends in the international literature

Trends in the literature on libraries in developing and developed countries were reviewed. The purpose was to find out, firstly, if there were any lessons to be learnt by South African librarians and educationists concerning the provision of school libraries, and secondly, to see what a transformed education system could mean for the control and organisation of school libraries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Sweden.

Literature from the 1960's to 1990 and including articles on Nigeria, Ghana, Papua-New Guinea, Africa, Asia, Kenya, Latin America, Tanzania, Libya, and Sweden was surveyed. Most of the articles, except for those on Swedish school libraries, described sparse provision and underdeveloped organisation of school libraries. The articles were chosen for their focus on the state and status of school library systems in developing countries. Sweden was chosen because of its community-school library model and because of the educational restructuring which occurred in the 1970's, resulting in changes in the school library system. Some of the most salient points are reflected here.

In 1970, the United Nations Educational Scientific and

Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) commented that there was no organised school library service, that the availability of libraries was of no concern in some countries, that there was no plan of development or financing of services and, finally, that the teaching programmes of the majority of primary and secondary schools occurred without libraries (UNESCO 1970:291).

Whitmore (1978:148), in a discussion on Latin American school libraries, states that:

> Books have generally not been considered an essential part of the educational process at any level. The rote method of learning is widespread, with or without textbooks, and libraries have not been considered necessary. School libraries have not developed due to this phenomena.

Whitmore goes on to claim that:

> Without libraries there can be no good primary school, no effective secondary school, no efficient university, nor can the life-long integrated education of adults be encouraged...[libraries] should not exist for reasons of tradition, prestige or national pride, but because it is essential if the education system is to achieve all its objectives. This concept has not been accepted by all educators, especially those in developing countries (1978:146).

She also points out that literacy campaigns can only be effective if there is appropriate reading matter. Library development is linked to changing the content of the

education system. The development of libraries has been passed over in favour of "building more classrooms, reforming the curriculum, and the use of audio-visual materials and scientific equipment" (Whitmore 1978:148-149).

The point is made that books peripheral to the set curriculum are not considered an important part of the learning process. Whitmore (1978:150) criticises those in charge of training librarians in Latin America for being too technicist, occupying themselves with developing standards, with "slight concern for developing services".

Mchombu (1984:561) discusses Tanzanian library development and points out that not only do most Tanzanian schools not have a library, but 90 percent of the population do not have access to any type of library. He criticises the use of Western models and 'standards' for school libraries, arguing that such models should not be uncritically transplanted in other countries. Libraries should rather develop slowly and organically.

Craver (1985), in a survey of library services in developing countries in Africa and Asia, assesses developments in school libraries. Libya had begun to develop a school library system; Ghana had not made adequate provision for school libraries; Nigeria had begun to place greater emphasis on school library services. Likewise, in Asia, library services followed a slow developmental pattern. Malaysia emphasised the establishment of school libraries, while Thailand developed its secondary school library system at the expense of the primary level.

A scarcity of indigenous literature in many countries limits library collection development (Craver 1985).

The slow development of libraries in Africa is ascribed to:

> ... [a] lack of funds and qualified library staff, governmental and public apathy towards libraries, the undeveloped state of the book-trade and publishing, poor communications and the complexity of indigenous languages (Aguolu 1975:40).

Kenyan school libraries are described as inadequate - where they exist:

> ...due to the lack of a definite [school library] policy the establishment of schools is left to the discretion and initiative of school principals to raise funds and to establish libraries (Mulaha 1983:210).

The importance of a school library system is also stressed by Alemna (1983:219) who refers to the situation in Ghana. School libraries in Ghana are described as deficient and

> ...are not functioning ... in the learning and teaching programme...it would appear that they [libraries] are [regarded as] just mere collections of materials in space with very little equipment for pupils to use.

He goes on to describe the insufficient building allocation for libraries, the lack of popular and current materials in stock, the lack of audiovisuals, the lack of professionally trained librarians, and other problems. He points out that most developing countries do not have statistics on school

libraries, or laws or regulations to ensure their existence. This has resulted in the haphazard and poor development of libraries (Alemna 1983:221).

Calvert (1987:180), writing on libraries in Papua New Guinea, contends that libraries should be

> ...allowed to develop in accordance with local values, and any attempt to make them conform to an alien pattern will make them remote from the people they intend to serve...library development [should be] part of a living, breathing culture of the people, an essential part of their growth and development.

There has been substantial critique of an education system based on Western education. Oral history, dance and mythology are all regarded as sources of history and thus of information. School libraries are therefore intended to contain a wide variety of

> ...print forms in addition to books and periodicals, and collections of audio-visual materials such as slides, filmstrips and sound cassettes (Calvert 1987:190).

The Swedish school library system stresses the importance of integrating library use into the curriculum (The school library 1990). Much of the success of the library system is due to the understanding of teachers on the role of libraries in education. Teachers "wanted to avoid traditional use of textbooks". In one area of Sweden, 25 percent of the budget for learning materials was allocated to the library. Libraries are accorded great importance to ensure that education will

"teach students to be independent...critical and creative". The Swedish Education Ordinance makes it compulsory for schools to have libraries. The role of libraries is not "only a question of a need for more resources, it is often a question of methodological change" (The school library 1990:8). A close relationship between teacher and resource centre is suggested:

> ...school libraries are part of the educational system so the same goals are valid. Libraries can contribute considerably to these objectives since they encourage independent, active learning, interdisciplinary studies, cultural experience and team work. A good school library improves the quality of teaching and learning (The school library 1990:10).

A change in curriculum has been shown to exert pressure on the school library to respond to an increased demand brought about by a change in teaching practices. In Skinnskatteberg, Sweden, the public library and school library have been integrated, with the objective of improving both services (Stenberg 1990). With the introduction of a new curriculum in the 1970s, there was an increased demand for a more varied supply of literature than the school library alone could supply.

> The new curriculum also emphasized that the students are to use explorative and investigative techniques in their studies. One should no more learn everything from one special textbook but collect facts from different sources. The students are to compile and critically examine the facts and the information they have obtained and for this purpose

they need access to numerous books but also to newspapers and magazines (Stenberg 1990:3-26).

The Swedish model is important in the context of the development of school library services in South Africa. It shows the essential link between legislation and the development of services nationally. It illustrates the way in which public and school library services could be rationalised by introducing a community-school library model. Significantly, the Swedish model shows that without a change in curriculum and teaching practice, libraries will never become an integral part of the education system.

In conclusion, the international literature reflects on the poor state of school libraries in developing countries. Much of this is the product of poor planning and inadequate financing. There is a movement away from traditional Western models of libraries and a move towards incorporating more non-print and audio-visual materials in collections. However, it seems that lack of finance, lack of a coherent library policy in some countries and a lack of planning has had a negative impact on the establishment of school libraries which could support education systems based on learning resources.

4. Trends in the literature on school libraries in South Africa

There are two identifiable trends in the South African literature on school libraries. The first comes from authors who have begun to explore the impact of educational

transformation on the way libraries are organised and controlled in schools. The second position comes from authors who fail to critique the structures of apartheid, but who argue that libraries are crucial to improving educational quality.

The dramatic increase in the enrolment of African secondary school pupils, from 30 700 in 1953 to 1 192 009 in 1985 (RESA 1988:5), has had a significant impact on the state's ability to provide adequate education, as well as on the increase in political organisation and mobilisation of pupils. The state has been faced with providing the facilities and teachers to cater for this increase in student enrolment. The historically low per capita expenditure for black education resulted in inadequate education provision for blacks at a number of different levels. Expenditure on African education has risen from 16 percent of the total education budget in 1969/70 (R68,5 million) to 48 percent of the total in 1991/92 (R8 647,2 million) (South African Institute of Race Relations 1992:193). Although the expenditure on African education has increased, spending on rural schools, specifically in the bantustans, is still grossly inadequate. KwaZulu schools are an example of this.

With the increase in African student numbers, student organisations strengthened, and school boycotts gave voice to student dissatisfaction with the inequalities in the education system. Students began to question more than the unequal allocation of education resources, and began to explore other alternatives to the hierarchical structures, course content and curriculum. It was during this period that the National Education Crisis Committee (now the

National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC)) was formed in December 1985. The NECC had as one of its aims the implementation of people's education.

People's education should be understood in the context of the resistance to bantu education by students, which began with the 1976 Soweto revolt. In dismantling and opposing the system of bantu education, students, teachers and educationists began to explore possible alternatives through the formulation of the concept and the practice of people's education.

While access to books is essential for an improved and dynamic education system, one which will enable the development of critical and skilled youth, the context in which learning took place created severe limitations on the development of alternatives in state schools. The provision of libraries under bantu education occurs in the context of authoritarian control over both bookstock selection and organisation. The emergency regulations of 1986 specifically stated that alternative materials were not allowed in schools. In Natal and the Transvaal, the continuing violence and displacement of pupils and teachers and the disruption of schooling severely limits the possibilities of developing school libraries where there are none. Gultig and Hart ([1989]:9), for example, point out that in 1988, 52 schools of 100 had been disrupted, either by Inkatha attacks, vigilante action or exclusion from school. The study by Nzimande and Thusi (1991) paints an even more devastating picture of the disruption to African schooling in Natal caused by the violence.

School libraries have received some attention from

education activists. For example, the NECC-affiliated Umlazi Education Crisis Committee initiated a commission in 1990 looking into the provision of such resources for students. Initiatives have been taken by the South African Council for Higher Education (SACHED) to develop creative ways of addressing the lack of resources available for scholars, especially in communities where no libraries exist.

The first trend mentioned above in the literature is represented by authors exploring the implications of the development of people's education for libraries. Van Zijl (1989), and Verbeek and Stilwell (1988) pursue some of the possibilities that the development of a policy of people's education has opened up for school libraries.

While explicitly discussing the question of people's education, Verbeek and Stilwell begin to redefine notions of the 'traditional' school library by discussing new models and exploring from an historical perspective changing the control of libraries. The primary underlying assumption of these arguments is that libraries are essential for the successful implementation of people's education.

Van Zijl (1989) argues that 'people's libraries' will provide crucial information support and that libraries are fundamental to the implementation of a people's education project in a post-apartheid South Africa.

> Without information support the implementation of People's Education in a post-apartheid South Africa will be very difficult (Van Zijl 1989:1).

The descriptive account of Van Zijl's 'people's library', however, fails to take into account the existing conditions and limitations, and one is left dissatisfied since he does not fully address broader policy questions and limitations.

A more satisfactory discussion of such libraries is provided by Stilwell and Verbeek's school-community library, a suitable institution for the development of a critical, well-informed and literate population. They argue that access to information will play a significant role in the new education system. They also begin to articulate a model for a new education system, one which is responsive both to the needs of schooling and to the needs of the community within the context of people's education.

They argue for a literacy which is more than

> the means of moulding efficient and obedient citizens, who also have the "merit" ... of being good consumers (Verbeek and Stillwell 1988:23).

> People's education is an ideal vehicle for self-directed study which utilizes a wide range of resources, both recorded and oral. The community/school library is the ideal medium for this type of exploration. The local input into education advocated by people's education would be reflected in the resources and activities of the centre (Verbeek and Stilwell 1988:28).

Hence, a school library which draws on community participation and alliances between the community and its schools for the development of people's education is

proposed. They articulate the role of school libraries as that of providing as wide a range of (multi-media) resources as possible in order to promote a critical consciousness among students (Verbeek and Stilwell 1988:23).

School libraries need to be developed within a changed education system, new teaching methodologies and a changed curriculum before they can play a significant role in education.

The appalling state of African education has become a focus of attention even by writers and academics who are sympathetic to the state. As a result of political and economic pressure, the improvement of African education has become a priority for the state. Various programmes have been proposed, such as the abortive 10-year plan proposed by F.W. de Klerk in 1986 and, more recently, the two *Education Renewal Strategy* documents. Success has eluded these attempts because of a history of past neglect, bureaucratic problems arising from multiple education departments, misuse of public monies and a lack of legitimacy.

A second position in the literature on school libraries claims that libraries are a crucial component for improving educational quality without an accompanying analysis of apartheid. This trend, in the context of South Africa, is reflected by authors who concentrated on the quantity of school libraries and media centres in African education departments (see, for example, Overduin 1983; Musiker 1986). The authors point out the weaknesses of apartheid education but obscure the lack of legitimacy of this system, thus ignoring a crucial element in educational restructuring.

As the state has focused greater attention on 'improving' African education (always constrained by its own policies), this is complemented by reformist oriented research.

'Traditional' school library models are accepted; there is an absence of a critique of the censorship and control of school library materials and of the way in which knowledge is selected and disseminated within the school. Finally, the question of transformation for empowerment is not addressed.

This position is represented by authors such as Overduin and De Wet (1987) who were commissioned to examine the provision of school libraries in South Africa. Overduin and De Wet focus primarily on the quantity of school library and media centres in South Africa. Overduin (1983) argues that there is a need to provide more libraries of a higher standard in order to improve African education.

Reasons for the poor provision of school libraries in African schools are portrayed as the product of poor policy development and planning without investigating the political history of bantu education. He attributes the lack of development of school libraries in African education departments to:

> ...a shortage of adequately trained teachers, a lack of effectually designed buildings, a need for handbooks in the indigenous languages and limited finances (Overduin 1983:71).

While this cannot be disputed, he ignores the political reasons behind the lack of the provision of such resources.

The disparity in expenditure between the different education departments is the focus of the improvement of school library services (Overduin 1989:269). Overduin subsequently ignores the impact of apartheid on the development of a school library system in the black education departments, and the effects of the fragmentation of educational control.

Overduin's (1989) study of school libraries in the different education departments is primarily empirical, and focuses on the standards that should exist in school libraries, without providing an historical analysis of how the disparities in educational provision for different population groups have come to exist.

This research was conducted between 1983-1986 and has shortcomings. Only 54 percent of black schools replied to the questionnaire; thus his findings may at times be misleading. Overduin does not indicate in his study whether or not the survey included the 'independent states' and bantustans. This would have a bearing on the statistics he provides as the expenditure on education is lower in the bantustans. Finding accurate statistics on the provision of school libraries is a common problem encountered by researchers in this field (National Education Policy Investigation 1992).

5. Conclusion

A major shortcoming of the literature on school libraries is that it tends not to engage with mainstream debates on the

role of education. Many authors are overly preoccupied with the (not entirely unimportant) technical issues relating to the organisation of libraries/media centres, focusing discussion on issues such as standards for information storage and retrieval in school libraries.

Although librarians writing in the field of school libraries have tended to pass over theoretical developments in the sociology of education, there is a parallel tendency by educational sociologists to ignore debates around the question of the transformation of school libraries/media centres.

The importance of exploring the development of libraries/media centres for a transformed education system is a recent development, as is the recognition that school libraries/media centres have a role to play in transforming both curriculum and current teaching practices.

Verbeek and Stilwell (1988:21), argue that

> ...the fragmentation of responsibility for education [and hence libraries] in South Africa under apartheid, together with the lack of coordinated and enthusiastic commitment to equal education inhibits the proper addressing of the entrenched educational imbalance.

A school library service for all schools with a mechanism for addressing disparities is essential for provision of an adequate education system in the future. A change in the process of the delivery of such support services is necessary, and this needs to take place in the context of the

overall transformation of the education system.

The provision of resources in secondary schools needs to be explored as an aspect of the development of policies for the implementation of people's education. While the inclusion of materials which challenge racism and sexism can change the content of the school library, the effect on the school curriculum would be limited. The school library, as much of the literature indicates, can provide support for the curriculum and store extra-curricular materials. However, if the curriculum and teaching practices are not rejuvenated, the impact of a school library system would be minimal.

A recently published report on library and information services by the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) - a project of the NECC - is the first comprehensive exploration of the implications of a transformed education system for the national library and information system. The report offers an insight into the problems of the current provision of library and information services and presents some options which could reconceptualise these services.

> Development and the provision of services to the disadvantaged would be emphasized, as would allocation of existing resources. State responsibility for LI [library and information] service provision would be imperative and the privatization of services would be discouraged. Appropriate training and the reorientation of training programmes for LI workers would be introduced to foster attention to the needs of disadvantaged communities (National Education Policy Investigation 1992:68).

The goals proposed by the report in the field of information services include:

- integration with the education system;
- equal provision of LIS [library and information services] to all communities and education sectors (such as schools);
- free and equal access to LIS for all South Africans;
- the establishment of a unitary LIS for South Africa;
- democratization of the structures of LIS and of practices in the workplace;
- human resource development ... reflecting the demographic realities of the country (National Education Policy Investigation 1992:3).

The most important goals mentioned for school libraries are the first two, especially with regard to equal provision for school libraries. There is a need for greater acknowledgement of the role of libraries in a renewed education system. Access to books can stimulate learning and help to foster a reading culture.

The question of competition for resources in an empoverished post-apartheid state would have an impact on funding for libraries. Verbeek and Stilwell (1988), as well as the Swedes, argue strongly in favour of multi-user libraries, more specifically a school-community library model which would enable more efficient use of existing resources and avoid duplication of services in the future.

There are various ways in which this school-community model could be implemented. It would have the greatest impact in rural areas where the effective pooling of resources by local authorities and educational institutions could serve to meet the backlog in these areas.

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